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SUBJECT: BOLIVIAN LEADERS FORECAST EARLY AGREEMENT WITH U.S.

¶1. (SBU) Recent statements by Bolivian President Evo Morales and Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca have underscored their commitment to a quick conclusion to ongoing bilateral framework agreement talks with us, raising public expectations of a signed accord before the end of November. In an October 31 press conference, Morales reaffirmed that Bolivia and the U.S. could sign an agreement this month, based on what he described as "state-to-state" cooperation with the U.S. and an emphasis on diplomatic, rather than "political," relations. Morales recounted his positive telephone exchange with Secretary Clinton on their shared birthday, October 26, and indicated support for the Bolivian delegation's efforts during bilateral talks the following day. "I accepted the draft agreement, with observations," Morales announced, without further elaboration.

¶2. (SBU) For his part, Minister Choquehuanca has moved from an initially cautious approach toward discussion of the talks, to now speaking of a bilateral agreement as nearly a fait accompli. On November 3, Choquehuanca disputed media accounts that suggested a return of ambassadors was imminent, noting that the issue is not directly addressed by the draft framework agreement and would only be taken up once (not if) the accord is signed. The agreement, he said, will create a context in which relations will improve and allow the return of ambassadors. Senior MFA officials confirmed to us November 4 that the minister and his team are increasingly optimistic about the prospects for an agreement this month.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Morales's and Choquehuanca's statements have been amplified by the Bolivian news media, and already many here are beginning to take for granted that our bilateral dialogue will yield a signed agreement by the month's end. Although the reaction should be manageable, failure to hold a third and final round here this month will be viewed as a setback by many observers -- and, no doubt, also welcomed by hard-line opponents within the GOB's senior ranks.  
CREAMER